



## Kilkenny County Council Fire and Rescue Service

### Community Fire Safety

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## Trauma Bears continued success with Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service



From September 2007 to their re-launch in February 2019 by Chief Fire Officer John Collins - more distressed children at the scenes of road traffic collisions and other incidents across Kilkenny are set to be comforted and relaxed - thanks to a continued support of this initiative of special trauma teddies used by Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service. All front-line fire tenders in Kilkenny will continue to have access to a unique piece of equipment which could reduce the suffering of children at operational incidents - a Trauma Teddy Bear – our 'Bravo Bears'!

Over 100 cuddly teddy bears will become part of the team, assigned to a very important task. The bears will ride on every frontline fire tender in Kilkenny. The Teddy's are now an integral part of our arsenal to help children during traumatic emergency situations.



*"The feedback over the last 12 years has been hugely positive – To help children to cope with a traumatic event when our fire brigades are in attendance"* stated Chief Fire Officer John Collins.

The intention is primarily to reduce the suffering of children at incidents and to help children cope with the stress that they feel from their involvement in a traumatic event. When children are involved in emergencies, it can be a traumatic experience for them. In order to soften the impact that an emergency may have on our children we have implemented this new "Trauma Bear" initiative. We hope to change their focus to a comforting object during a difficult situation.

Coordinating this initiative is Killian John Hennessy, Senior Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service. We hope that situations in which we will utilise these bears will be few, but we are pleased to be prepared to make a difference in the lives of our children.

SACFO Hennessy said: *"The children may not necessarily be injured; it may be that they are witnesses to an incident that causes distress. It is often hard to predict how drivers, passengers or pedestrians will cope with being involved in road traffic collisions and children may be particularly affected. We want to do all that we can to alleviate the distress caused by collisions on our roads.*

*The Trauma Bears will also be used to assist the fire and rescue personnel in any situation where they can calm children and assist fire & rescue personnel in their duties. The Trauma Bear will be given to the child to keep. To ensure their maximum effectiveness they will be used only in exceptional circumstances, the teddy bears may not be given out at every incident but they will be deployed where the fire and rescue personnel considers it to be appropriate. The Trauma Teddies we hope will be very helpful and the teddies have been greatly appreciated by those children who have already adopted and benefited from them."*

The cute teddy bears - called Bravo Bear - were first rolled out in September 2007, Station Officer Paul Comerford of Thomastown Fire Brigade (KK15) and Station Officer Eddie Brennan of Castlecomer Fire Brigade (KK12) will continue these positive efforts and were on-hand in February 2019 at Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters once again. The remaining 'Bravo Bears' have been sent to the rest of the fire brigades throughout the county.

*"The teddy bears will play an invaluable role in comforting, calming and relaxing traumatised children in road traffic collisions and other incidents."* agreed both SO Paul Comerford and SO Eddie Brennan.

Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service are funding this initiative through their own limited funds by promoting our self-authored fire safety registers, if you or your company would like to purchase a fire safety register to help sustain this initiative your assistance would be gratefully received.

**You can get more information from the Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service. Visit our website at <http://www.fire.kilkennycoco.ie> for further information on smoke alarms and general fire safety advice.**

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